



STATE OF WASHINGTON

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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### Handle Eggs With Care

An increase in reports of illness caused by the bacteria *Salmonella enteritidis* in Washington may be associated with eating raw or undercooked eggs. WSDA is working with the [Department of Health](#) and others to determine the source of the bacteria.

Although it's rare, eggs may contain the bacteria Salmonella. And, if the eggs are eaten raw or undercooked, the bacteria can cause illness. Young children, the elderly and immune-compromised individuals are at most risk.

To prevent egg safety problems, handle eggs carefully just as you would other perishable foods such as raw meat, poultry and fish. You should also refrigerate and thoroughly cook eggs.

### Safe Egg Handling Tips

- Wash your hands after contact with raw eggs at each stage of preparation including cooking and service.
- Cook eggs or egg dishes to 160°F.
- Do not eat or drink foods containing raw eggs.
- Avoid homemade "health foods" containing eggs that are not cooked thoroughly. (*Suggestion: If you are making eggnog, ice cream, or other egg recipes, use commercially pasteurized eggs in your recipes or use a cooked egg base, such as a cooked custard, when preparing the mix for ice cream.*)
- Serve egg dishes immediately after cooking.
- Refrigerate leftover egg dishes as soon as possible after serving and reheat leftovers to 165°F before serving.

### Washington a Leader in Egg Safety

The growth of Salmonella slows as the temperature of an egg declines and, at 45°F or below, the bacteria stops replicating. Also, when Salmonella is exposed to these lower temperatures, it's more easily killed by cooking.

In 1991, Washington became the first state to require a "keep refrigerated" label on egg cartons. Since 1995, Washington has required eggs to be refrigerated at 45 degrees or below at all stages of distribution and retail sales.

Refrigeration at 45 degrees or below became a national requirement in 2001. And all egg cartons at retail outlets must now carry the following safe handling statement:

*"To prevent illness from bacteria: keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly."*

### More information on the safe handling of eggs

- [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#)
- [USDA Food Safety Inspection Service](#)